



the gull

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California Raptors

The February general membership meeting will feature a program by Glen Olson, a representative of the National Audubon Society. Glen will present a slide show on California raptors and will discuss the life history, range and status of the Golden Eagle, Bald Eagle, White-tailed Kite, Harris' Hawk, Peregrine and Prairie Falcons.

The meeting will be at the Northbrae Community Church, 941 The Alameda, Berkeley, on Thursday, February 10, at 7:30 p.m.

March Membership Meeting

The wildlife and ancient cultures of Costa Rica will be featured at the March membership meeting. Plan to join us on March 10 at Fort Mason's Building C in San Francisco. Further details will appear in the March *Gull*.

—PROGRAM COMMITTEE

Field Trips Calendar

See the January *Gull* for the following trips:

Saturday, February 5—San Mateo Coast.

Saturday/Sunday, February 12/13—Los Banos State Refuge.

Saturday/Sunday, February 12/13—Panoche Valley.

Wednesday, February 9—Mini-trip. Call Ruth Voss for details (525-8032 after 6 p.m.).

Sunday, February 20—San Francisco Bay Wildlife Refuge. Meet at 8 a.m. at the refuge parking lot. From the East Bay take Hwy. 17 and exit on Jarvis. Go to the end of Jarvis and make a right turn onto Hwy. 84. Where Thornton Ave. intersects Hwy. 84, make a left turn into the parking lot. From the West Bay take Hwy. 101 to the Dumbarton Bridge. Bring warm clothes, lunch and a scope if you have one. We will be look-

ing for shorebirds and waterfowl of the salt marsh, salt ponds and mudflats. This trip will end about 2 p.m. Leader: Chris Swarth (849-2053).

(✓)

Saturday, March 5—San Pablo Reservoir. Meet at 9 a.m. at the intersection of San Pablo Dam Rd. and Bear Creek Rd. From Berkeley take Wildcat Canyon Rd. to its end (the meeting site). From Hwy. 24 take the Orinda exit and go left on Camino Pablo to its end (the meeting site). We will hike about 1.5 miles along a paved road between the Maintenance Station and Midpoint Recreation Area. Birding will be in grasslands, pine and oak woodlands and streamside willows. Bring lunch, liquids and a scope if you have one. Leaders: Sue and Bob Watson (254-4077). (✓)

Saturday, March 12—San Francisco Bird Blitz. Participants in last year's blitz saw over 100 species within the City limits. This year's mad dash to build up the biggest possible "City Day List" will begin at **7:30 a.m. sharp** at the parking lot above Sutro Baths on Merrie Way. From there we will caravan to other sites including Golden Gate Park, Lake Merced and Candlestick Point. Bring lunch and liquids. We will bird until dusk when we will adjourn to Celia's Mexican restaurant where for a minimal cost we can avoid going home to cook dinner. Please contact Alan by March 5 if you plan to join us for dinner. Leader: Alan Hopkins (585-5669). (✓)

Sunday, March 13—Tennessee Cove. This will be a two-mile walk to Tennessee Cove, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, to look for land and shorebirds, including White-throated Swifts. From San Francisco, take Hwy. 1 exit off Hwy. 101 toward the Mill Valley and Stinson Beach exit. In about one-quarter mile turn left onto Tennessee Valley Rd. Meet at the end of the road at 9 a.m. Bring lunch. Leader: Betty Short (921-3020 work). (✓)

Note from the Field Trips Committee—Beginners are always welcome on GGAS field trips. Leaders and participants are eager to introduce newcomers to this activity which we all enjoy. From time to time the committee will plan trips especially for beginners. These trips generally go to nearby areas to see resident species.

Beginners' Trip—Saturday, February 19—Bay Park Refuge, Oakland. Meet at 9 a.m. in the parking lot at the north end of Bay Park Refuge for a morning of leisurely birding. From Hwy. 17 take the Hegenberger Rd. exit, go right (north) on Edgewater Dr. for about one mile to the park. Bring binoculars, field guide and spotting scope if you

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have them. Lunch is optional. We should see a variety of ducks and shorebirds. Leader: Dave Cornman (825-2106). (✓)

Carpooling arrangements can be made for trips marked (✓). Call Kate Partridge at 236-9053 and leave a message. She will contact you.

Problems: If for any reason you have difficulty getting in touch with a field trip leader or need information regarding a trip, call Shirley Kelly (387-8290) or the GGAS office (843-2222).

—FIELD TRIPS COMMITTEE

December Observations — through December 29

LATE FALL ON SE FARALLON

Farallon reports (excellent, our thanks always to Point Reyes Bird Observatory) for the fall months arrived after *The Gull's* copy deadline, so the following highlights cover late October through late November. The three Rough-legged Hawks on SE Farallon Nov. 4 would suggest a greater mainland flight than we have experienced because the species hasn't appeared there except during flight years. All other Farallon highlights were single birds: Canada Goose on Nov. 3 (few Island records), Tropical Kingbird Nov. 18, Solitary Vireo (eastern race) Oct. 26, **Lucy's Warbler** Nov. 17, Black-throated Green Warbler Oct. 22, Palm Warbler Oct. 25, American Tree Sparrow Nov. 10, Swamp Sparrow Oct. 27, Harris' Sparrow Nov. 20, Lapland Longspur Oct. 23, Snow Bunting Oct. 30.

WATERBIRDS

A Yellow-billed Loon welcomed Christmas Counters back to the dock at Marshall Boatworks, Tomales Bay, Dec. 18 (CS, AK, *et al*). The Least Bittern wintering at Palo Alto Baylands delighted the multitudes throughout the period. Seven reports of Cattle Egrets totaled 14 individuals: singles on SE Farallon Nov. 23 and Dec. 8 (PRBO), one near Lodi Sewage Ponds Dec. 3 (GC), four at Pine Gulch Creek Dec. 4 (PL, *et al*), two near St. Helena Dec. 13 (CR), two at West Pittsburg Dec. 19 (*fide* BR), three near Sebastopol in mid-Dec. (*fide* BDP). Nine White-faced Ibises roamed the West Pittsburg area much of the month (mob) and seven were still there Dec. 27 (EV).

One of two Tundra Swans at Bolinas Lagoon Dec. 12 was identified as the Eurasian "**Bewick's**" race (DDeS, *et al*). Three "Blue" Snow Geese were at Gray Lodge Dec. 4 (JR, *et al*) and a Eurasian Green-winged Teal was there Dec. 11 (BED). A male Tufted Duck was discovered on the Napa Sewage Ponds Dec. 26 (MB).

Waterfowl's biggest splash was made by the irruption of **King Eiders**, starting an unprecedented year for the species here. Already two have been found in southern California, the first being an incredible adult male at Imperial Beach, San Diego County. An apparent female eider,

most likely a King, was reported from Fort Point, San Francisco, Dec. 12 (TK). An immature male was beside Moss Landing Marine Lab Dec. 18-19 (BD, RF) and rumor says that the same or a similar individual was seen earlier at Monterey Harbor. Most cooperative was the female (by plumage) in Emeryville Marina and at nearby Ashby Spit Dec. 19-29 (JG, mob). A Harlequin Duck in Tomales Bay Dec. 18 (CS, AK, *et al*) was the only one reported away from their usual Salt Point-Sea Ranch haunts. As last winter, Oldsquaws again seem scarce, with singles in Bolinas Lagoon Dec. 2 (MH) and in Tomales Bay Dec. 18 (CS, AK, *et al*), the only ones reported by the cut-off date. The male **Smew** returned to Foster City, where it was rediscovered Dec. 1 (KHi) and where it remained all month (LCB, BDP, JP, *et al*).

The only Lesser Golden Plovers reported to be wintering are four near Spaletta Ranch, Point Reyes, through Dec. 26 (KT). Both the **Common Black-headed Gull** and the **Little Gull** remained at Stockton Sewage Ponds through December (BH, CSp, MLR, RR, EM, AM).

LANDBIRDS

A real surprise was an **adult** Northern Goshawk in forest of Redwood Regional Park Dec. 19 (DM, *et al*). In a year already remarkable for Broad-winged Hawks, four more were found. On Nov. 27 one was east of Half Moon Bay (AE) and another was near Del Rey Oaks Dec. 11 (KVV, KC). The other two were seen on the Point Reyes Christmas Count Dec. 18 (RS, *et al*) near Inverness and over Olema Marsh. Always rare here, a "Harlan's" Red-tailed Hawk was on Bay Farm Island from Dec. 11 (JM, *et al*). Even our usual form of Red-tail was very rare for SE Farallon Dec. 12 (PRBO).

Bodega Head hosted a White-winged Dove Dec. 11 (JP, BDP). A probable Ash-throated Flycatcher in north Oakland Dec. 21, 26, 27 was especially mysterious because nothing in the neighborhood should have been attractive to any *Myiarchus* flycatcher (RB). Harder to find than in previous winters, the Eurasian Skylark nevertheless remained near Hall Ranch (JP, *et al*).

A lingering Tennessee Warbler was at Stinson Beach Dec. 12 (JP, *et al*). Late Black-throated Gray Warblers were on SE Farallon Nov. 26 (PRBO) and in Monterey Dec. 29 (KVV, KC). Two Palm Warblers were spotted in mid-December, one near Sebastopol (BDP) and the other in Inverness Dec. 18 (RS). The Black-and-white Warbler at Stinson Beach State Park was resighted Dec. 4 and 12 (JM, JP, *et al*). Another visited San Francisco Zoo Dec. 1 (HW, MW) and a third foraged in Inverness Park Dec. 17 (RS).

An American Tree Sparrow in Napa was a day late for a Christmas present (KVV, KC). The rarest of the month's sparrows was a Clay-colored between Cotati and Sebastopol Dec. 19 and a Swamp Sparrow was in the same area that day (LCB). The Sharp-tailed Sparrow at Pine

Gulch Creek remained through the month (mob, DP), but the one at Palo Alto Baylands was last reported Nov. 30 (BB). Another Sharp-tailed Sparrow at a traditional site was in the Dumbarton Marsh Dec. 11 (TG). Four or five Harris' Sparrows were an unusual complement for the month. Singles were at the Napa River Ecological Reserve near Yountville Dec. 3 (MB), in San Leandro Dec. 6-20 (PG) and at Palo Alto Airport Dec. 9 (PM). Two sightings in mid-month between Cotati and Sebastopol (LCB, BDP) were only three miles apart, so possibly only one individual was involved. A "Bullock's" Northern Oriole began visiting a hummingbird feeder in San Rafael on Dec. 10 (CF).

Note to contributors: Please remember that any written reports must be *in my hands* by the final days of each month in order to be included in that month's column. Reports mailed after the 26th are likely to arrive too late.

Observers: Ruth Babcock, Stephen F. Bailey, Murray Berner, Laurence C. Binford, Bill Bowsman, Dennis Bromley, Karen Cartier, Graham Chisholm, David DeSante, Bruce E. Deuel, Bob Dyer, Art Edwards, Carter Faust, Rolan Franz, Tom Gatz, Fred Gemmil, Phil Gordon, Jeff Greenhouse, Keith Hansen (KH), Kevin Hintsa (KH), Melody Hirsh, Bob Hirt, Andrea Kieserman, Ted Koundakjian, Phil Lenna, Akiko Makishima, Eugene Makishima, Peter Metropulos, Mark Miller, Steve Miller, many observers (mob), Joseph Morlan, Dan Murphy, Point Reyes Bird Observatory (Farallon reports thanks to Teya McElroy and Phil Henderson), Chris Olson, Dennis Parker, Benjamin D. Parmeter, John Parmeter, Bob Richmond, Jean Richmond, Robert Roadcap, Chris Roper, Mary Louise Rosegay, Chris Spooner (CSp), Rich Stallcup, John Suchek, Chris Swarth (CS), Ken Taylor, Kent Van Vuren, Ed Vine, Harry White, Mike Wihler.

—STEPHEN F. BAILEY, *Observations Editor*
Museum of Vertebrate Zoology,
University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720
(phone 548-9507 or Joseph Morlan at 524-7421)

Bird Census in Tilden Park and Wildcat Canyon

The Regional Park District has published a revised bird census of Tilden Park and Wildcat Canyon. It is the start of a year-long effort to develop a comprehensive checklist for the two parks.

By collecting data from as many as possible birders the value of the checklist will be enhanced and it will be more than a list of names. It should include habitat, seasonal occurrence and relative abundance for each species.

Birders may get copies of the census form at the Nature Center in Tilden Park, where additional information is also available. Naturalist Ira Bletz would be glad to answer questions by phone at 525-2233.

The Back Yard Birder

Some birds, especially those of boreal North America (the most northerly portion), have spectacular emigrations called irruptions. This term refers to irregular movements of a large number of birds beyond their normal range due to inadequate food supplies. Other words used for this phenomenon are invasions, influxes or incursions. There are other reasons for the movements of birds which are NOT irruptions:

- Bad weather often drives birds from their normal range.
- Some species, the Carolina Wren, e.g., expand their ranges at intermittent intervals.
- Local breeding populations often increase because of an abundance of food supplies such as outbreaks of Gypsy Moths. During this time Black and Yellow-billed Cuckoo populations increase.
- Some species such as the Cedar Waxwing and the Dickcissel are nomadic, seeming to range according to no fixed schedule.

The most common irruptive birds are birds of the tundra or the boreal forests. The Northern and the Rough-legged Hawks, the Snowy and the Great Gray Owls, Clark's Nutcrackers, members of the finch family, Evening Grosbeaks and Red Crossbills especially, are a few who fit this behavior pattern.

A common characteristic among these birds is that they have a fairly restricted food preference which is subject to sharp fluctuations in abundance. Many northern raptors rely on small rodents such as lemmings and voles to feed themselves and their young. These rodents have occasional low population levels. It has been noted that about every four years Snowy Owls occur in large numbers south of the Canadian border because of this cyclical occurrence. Similarly, crossbills depend upon cone crops which vary in irregular abundance depending upon climatic factors.

These irruptive movements are not always north to south. Some birds travel east to west or vice versa within their continent-wide zone. Years ago Thick-billed Parrots of Mexico were seen in large numbers in New Mexico, having been forced to migrate *north* due to poor cone crops in their native mountain pine forests.

Last January a single Gyrfalcon spent some time near Davis. A native of the tundra of Canada, this magnificent large white bird of the falcon family was considered exclusively a king's bird during medieval times. Sought by Arab princes even today, they are becoming scarce despite protection in their breeding territory. In the north the Gyrfalcon feeds on rodents and ptarmigans. The flight of this bird is strong and powerful but not nearly as swift or as agile as the Peregrine Falcon's movements.

Observers noted the lone Gyrfalcon hunting pheasant, which abound in the Davis area. Because it lacked maneuverability, the pheasants' short, low bursts of speed made the Gyrfalcon appear clumsy. It must have had some success, however, as it stayed in the area for several weeks. I dragged my husband through muddy fields and along country roads for hours in quest of this rare bird, with no success. We were rewarded with sightings of Great Blue Herons, White-tailed Kites and Marsh Hawks. The comic aspect of carloads of people, laden with scopes and field glasses, crisscrossing country lanes was not lost on us.

I mention this incident, not as an example of true irruption (it no doubt was a young bird driven south by fierce January storms), but as an example of the occasional rare bird in our area. If you are interested in pursuing the unusual, you might call Audubon's Rare Bird Alert (843-2211) for a recorded message regarding what's lurking in our area.

—MEG PAULETICH

Bird Ecology Class in Albany

Dr. Stephen F. Bailey's series of classes at Albany Adult School continues this month with one entitled *Winter Bird Ecology*. The first meeting is Tuesday, February 8, at 7 p.m. See your January *Gull* for details or call 548-9507.

Spring Birding Classes in San Francisco

GGAS is again offering free evening bird classes through the Galileo-Marina Community College Center at the corner of Fillmore and Bay streets. Each class consists of a weekly two-and-one-half hour illustrated slide-lecture stressing the identification, status and habits of North American birds. The instructor is Joe Morlan, compiler of our weekly recorded "Northern California Rare Bird Alert" and co-author of *Birds of Northern California*. There is a policy of "open enrollment" and anyone is welcome to enroll at any time during the 18-week semester. Simply go directly to the classroom, room 254, Marina Middle School, on the day and time indicated below. There is convenient free parking in the school lot off Bay St. on the east side of the building.

Ornithology I is designed for those with no previous birding experience. It serves as an introduction to the biology and identification of common Bay Area birds and will meet Tuesdays starting February 8 at 7-9:30 p.m.

Ornithology II is for those who already know most of the common birds but want to sharpen their birding skills. It systematically covers water birds including gulls and terns and will meet Wednesdays starting February 9 at 7-9:30 p.m.

Ornithology III is a continuation of Ornithology II. It covers land

birds including warblers and sparrows. Meet Thursdays starting February 10 at 7-9:30 p.m.

Optional field trips for which there is a fee, will be arranged on weekends. Details will be announced in class. Please bring binoculars and field guides to class if you have them. For more information call the college at 931-3595.

The Rise and Fall of the Anna's Hummingbird

Courtship activities for most of our resident landbirds do not begin until the onset of milder weather and longer days in April. One energetic species, the pugnacious Anna's Hummingbird, is undaunted by the relative harshness of winter in the Bay Area. They are in fact the earliest nesting of all of California's birds and nests with eggs have even been found in late December! The short days surrounding the winter solstice signal the beginning of their breeding season and courting males are now a common sight and sound.

A recent summary of this species' courtship behavior titled "Aggressive and Courtship Displays of the Male Anna's Hummingbird" by F. Gary Stiles appears in the May 1982 issue of the Condor (available in the GGAS office library). His analysis of the dive display, which he terms "the most elaborate and spectacular dive display of any North American hummingbird," is just one aspect of this excellent article.

The dive begins with the male singing a buzzy song while hovering ten feet above the object of his attentions, which is often, but not always, another Anna's. He then starts a wavering climb straight up about 100 feet before diving earthward at speeds approaching 50 mph. The dive culminates in a loud, high-pitched squeak. The display is elliptical in shape, lasts about 12 seconds and may be repeated 5-10 times in rapid succession. Interpretation of the meaning of this display has been questioned; traditionally it has been considered a courtship display performed for a watching female. Stiles suggests that it is actually an aggressive display designed to force male Anna's and other birds out of a territory. From observations and experiments with hummingbird models, he found this display given indiscriminately toward male, female and juvenile Annas. Stiles even reports that he was the object of an especially aggressive territory-holder! The dive apparently plays a secondary role in courtship while a hovering "shuttle" display and high intensity song are of much greater importance. All these displays are discussed in detail by Stiles.

Opinions also differ on the mechanism producing the loud squeak that terminates the dive. In 1940 T. L. Rodgers performed an ingenious experiment by mounting some outer tail feathers from an adult male Anna on a stick and whipping them through the air. The characteristic

popping sound was produced, indicating that air passing rapidly through these specialized tail feathers was responsible. In 1979, however, researchers using a spectrograph (a sound analyzing machine) found that Annas produce a song note identical in pitch to the dive sound. They argued that the dive sound is entirely *vocal* in origin. Through further investigation, Stiles now concludes that this sound contains both vocal *and* mechanical elements. A vocal "ZWEE" is given immediately before and blends in with the mechanically-produced, explosive squeak.

This winter if you are out in good hummingbird country take the time to observe (and listen to!) the dive of these tiny avian dynamos. Perhaps you will be lucky enough to see some of the other less conspicuous displays, too.

—CHRIS SWARTH

Point Reyes Bird Observatory

Point Reyes Bird Observatory's Palomarin Field Station and Visitor Center is open daily with bird banding demonstrations on Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday mornings in winter. Visitors are welcome at any time. Group field trips or classroom visits from the education program can be arranged through Linda Parker, co-ordinator, at 868-1221.

PRBO Natural Excursions

February 19-26: Palenque and Catemaco. Instructors Dave DeSante and Peter Pyle will explore the beautiful and complex ecology of the neotropics with participants.

February 19-21: Honey Lake Valley. With instructors Dan Ariola and Roger Harris, participants will view avian communities in dense coniferous forests, open freshwater lakes and the arid Great Basin habitats. Observe Sage Grouse courtship, great numbers of water fowl and wintering Bald Eagles.

For information phone 868-1221.

Summer Safari Reminder

Wildlife and birdlife will be the focus of a three-week July safari to Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe, sponsored by GGAS and led by naturalist Mike Wihler.

Traveling to remote game parks, such as Etosha, Moremi and Kariba, participants will enjoy an unbelievable variety of birds and mammals. In Botswana alone, there will be Fish Eagle, Marabou Stork, African Jacana, four species of bee-eater, more than 500 species of birds.

Accommodations are in comfortable lodges and tented camps with excellent food. Transport is by private plane, land rover or minibus within countries.

Tour leader Mike Wihler, a past member of GGAS's board of directors and chairman of the extended field trips committee, has led other nature trips through the United States and Latin America.

Tour cost, including air from San Francisco, will be approximately \$4,600. Further details can be obtained from Gulliver's Travel, 3625 Sacramento St., San Francisco, CA 94118, or by calling 346-4400.

Checklist Addition

An addition can be made to your *Checklist of Birds of the East Bay Region, California*, by Richard Erickson. Under warblers, add:

Chestnut-sided Warbler, CASUAL in FALL.

Audubon Canyon Ranch Offerings

Winter Watercolors: Our Moody Coast, February 19/20, taught by Rosinda Holmes. Fee is \$30.

Preparing Study Skins, February 26, taught by Bill Manolis. Fee is \$15. For information phone the Ranch at 383-1644.

COASTAL ZONE 83

The third in a series of interdisciplinary conferences has been scheduled for June 1-4 at the Town and Country Hotel in San Diego. Over 1000 interested professionals and citizens attended the immediate predecessor, COASTAL ZONE 80 at Hollywood, Florida; similar attendance is expected for COASTAL ZONE 83. Information is available from Orville T. Magoon, general chairman, P.O. Box 26062, San Francisco, CA 94126.

Issues to be addressed include environmental concerns, development management, access to shore, governmental considerations, impact of energy development and new directions in marine policy and coastal management. Field trips to significant coastal wetlands and relevant short courses will be conducted before and after the conference.

BIENNIAL NATIONAL AUDUBON CONVENTION

How about a vacation next summer in the beautiful Rocky Mountains of Colorado? Plan it around the biennial National Audubon Convention at Estes Park. The convention starts with a field trip into Rocky Mountain National Park on Monday, August 29, followed by three-and-a-half days of panels, talks and workshops on the society's role in research, education and action. The theme this year will be *Think Globally, Act Locally*. Both before and after the convention field trips and nature study workshops, river rafting, wilderness backpacking and a bicycle trip will be offered. August 24 through September 5 are the dates to consider, covering the convention and the pre-and post-convention activities. More information will be available in future issues of the *Gull*.

February Cooper's Meeting

On Monday, February 7, Dr. Patricia Zenone of the Predatory Bird Research Group at UC Santa Cruz will present a talk to the Northern Chapter of the Cooper Ornithological Society entitled: "Defense of Paternity in the Ring Dove: Laboratory Studies."

In recent years, biologists have become increasingly interested in the genetic aspects of the reproductive behavior of birds and Dr. Zenone's research is some of the most exciting in this rapidly expanding field. Her talk promises to be extremely informative. All interested in birds are invited to attend. The presentation will begin at 8 p.m. in Room 2503 Life Sciences Building, UC Berkeley, preceded by a business meeting of the society at 7:30 p.m.

Field Assistant Wanted

A field assistant is needed to work on breeding biology of Northern Orioles at Hastings Reservation in Monterey County. The job requires long hours in the field watching color-banded birds. A very modest salary, living accommodations and beautiful scenery are offered. If interested call Pam Williams at 642-2893 or leave a message at 642-3567.

GIFTS AND BEQUESTS

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The Society welcomes gifts in general or gifts in honor or in memory of relatives and friends. Such gifts will be used as specified by the donor or, if unspecified, at the discretion of the GGAS Board of Directors. This includes their use for general GGAS activities or for special programs of the Society including Audubon Canyon Ranch of which GGAS is a sponsor. Please send your gift in the form of a check made out to the Golden Gate Audubon Society, Inc. to Minnie Groshong, Corresponding Secretary, Golden Gate Audubon Society, 2718 Telegraph Ave., #206, Berkeley, CA 94705-1179. All gifts are tax deductible. The Society is also appreciative of any bequests. Such bequests should specify as recipient the Golden Gate Audubon Society, Inc. All gifts, donations and bequests will be acknowledged in *The Gull* as well as personally on behalf of the Society by the Corresponding Secretary.



Golden Gate Audubon Society, Inc.

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THE GULL

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Mail for all individuals listed above should be sent to the GGAS office.

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***The Gull* deadline is the first of the month for the following month.**

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